

VII Density

The population growth in Houston was interrupted by the sudden economic recession of 1982-1987, which resulted in the loss of 35,000 residents. However, by 1990, the City of Houston had gained 72,000 new residents. A population increase of 321,865 was recorded between 1990 and 2000, and the population grew by another 2.9 percent in the next three years.

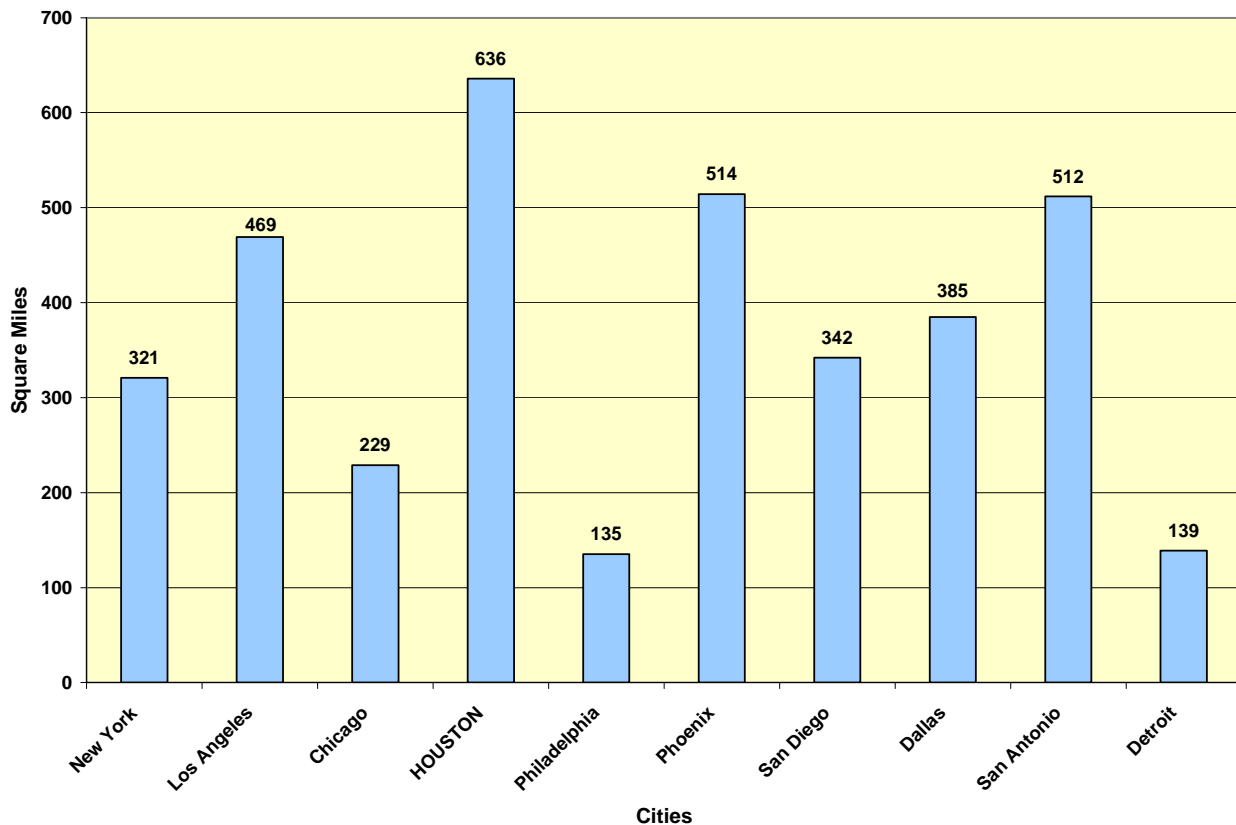
Houston is considered a “big, small town” with a central business district surrounded by many rural developments (*Houston Business Journal*, Feb. 26, 1999). The fourth largest city in the United States has plenty of room to grow. One of Houston’s appeals is that one can own a home in the inner city with a yard and plenty of room to raise a family, just minutes from downtown, unlike most major metropolitan areas.

When comparing Houston to the other ten cities, Houston, population 1,953,631, is far larger

geographically than the remaining cities with an area of 636 square miles in 2004. This is an increase from the 581 square miles listed in the 1990 Census. The city of New York, with a population of over 8 million residents, has only 321 square miles of land.

The population per square mile for Houston was 3,160 in 2003, up from 2,807 in 1990. Although the City is expecting an influx of residents over the next ten years, there are hopes that developments such as the light rail may help offset high-density problems like traffic congestion and air pollution (*Dr. Carol Lewis, Texas Southern University, Transportation Planning Department, class lecture Fall 2003*).

Land Area in Square Miles: 2004

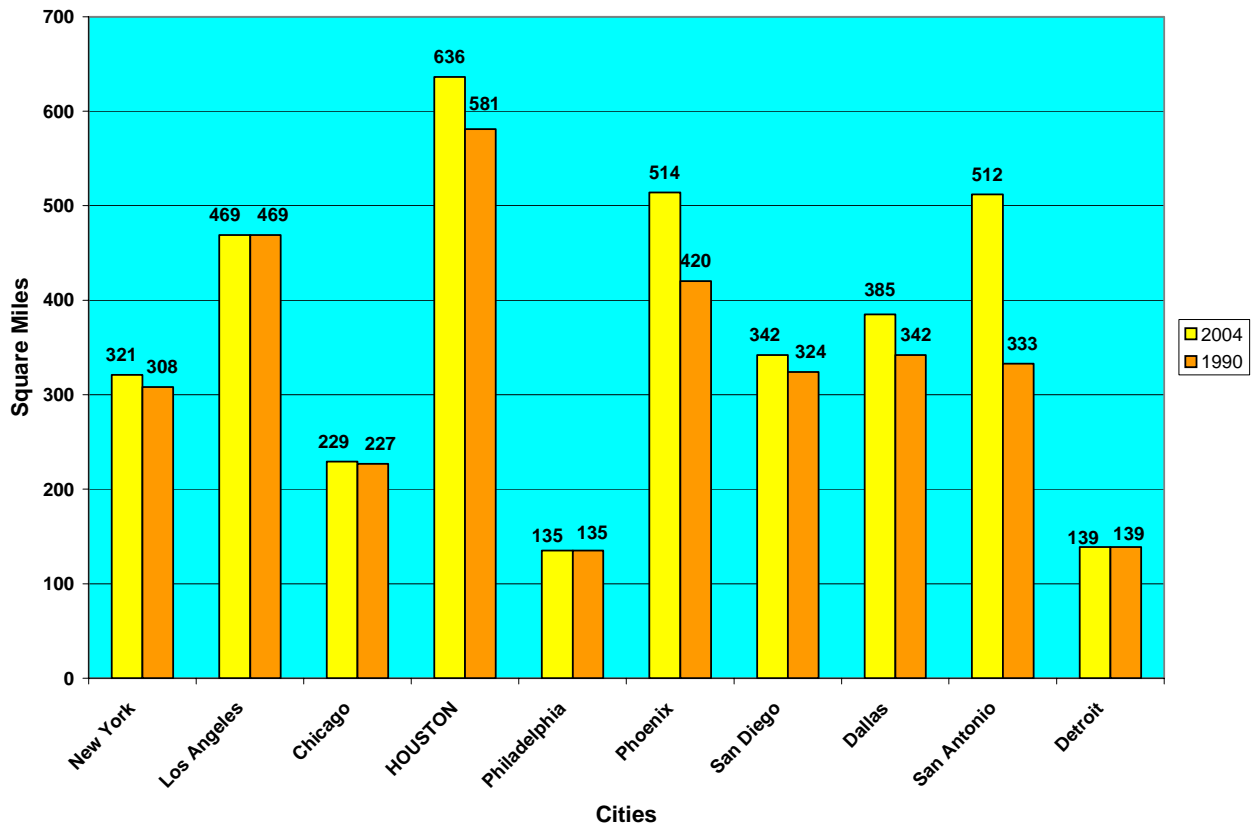


* Compared to the ten largest cities in the U.S., Houston has the largest geographical area (636 square miles) followed by Phoenix and San Antonio.

* The City of Philadelphia has the least amount of land area (135 square miles) followed by Detroit (139 square miles).

Sources: Planning Departments of the individual municipalities.

Change in Land Area: 1990 to 2004



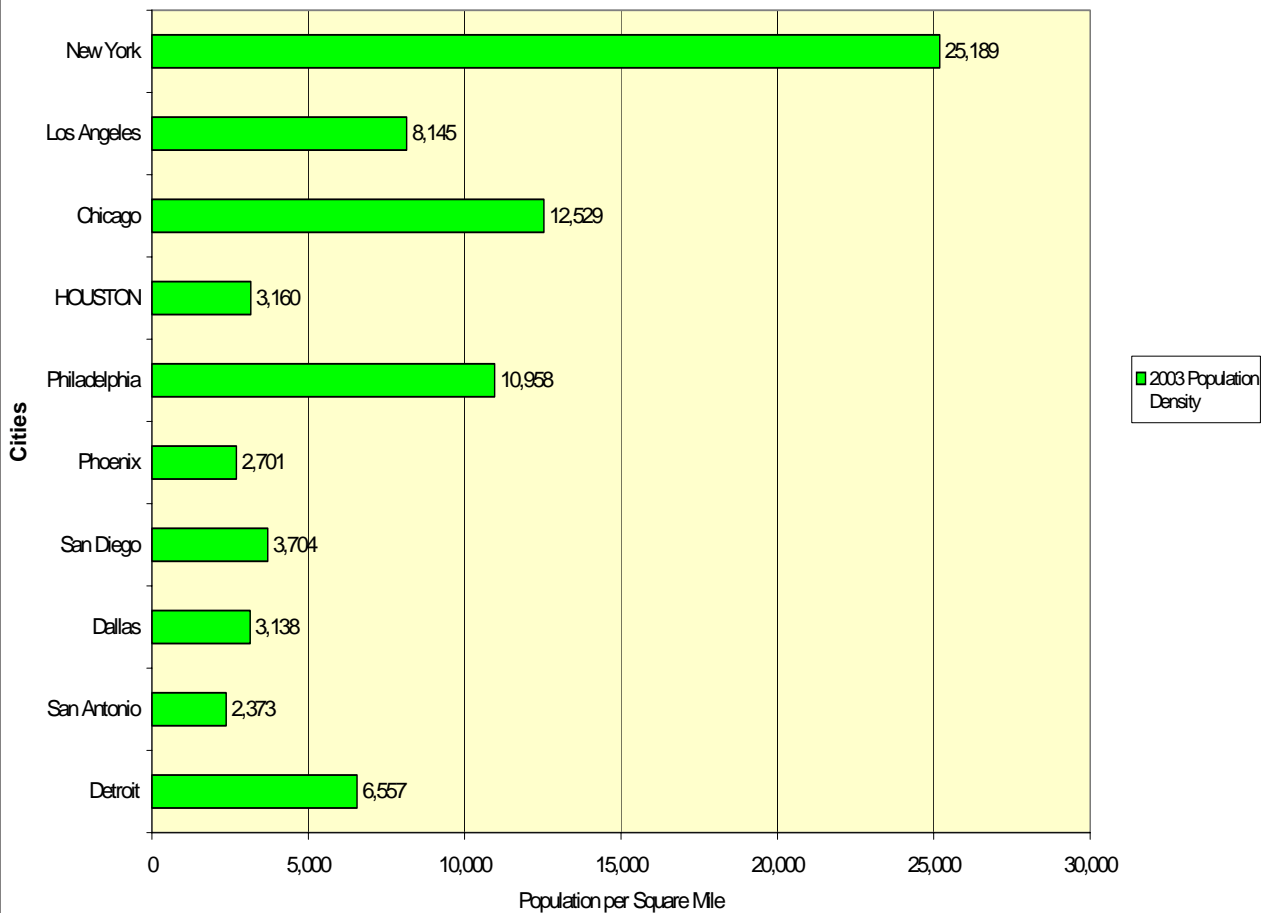
* Houston experienced a 9.5% increase in land area, from 581 to 636 square miles, between 1990 and 2004.

* Between 1990 and 2004 the City of San Antonio grew 53.8% in area, the largest increase of the ten largest cities in the U.S.

* The least amount of growth took place in Detroit, Los Angeles and Philadelphia, which did not annex any land during the fourteen year period.

Sources: Planning Departments of the individual municipalities.

Population Density: 2003

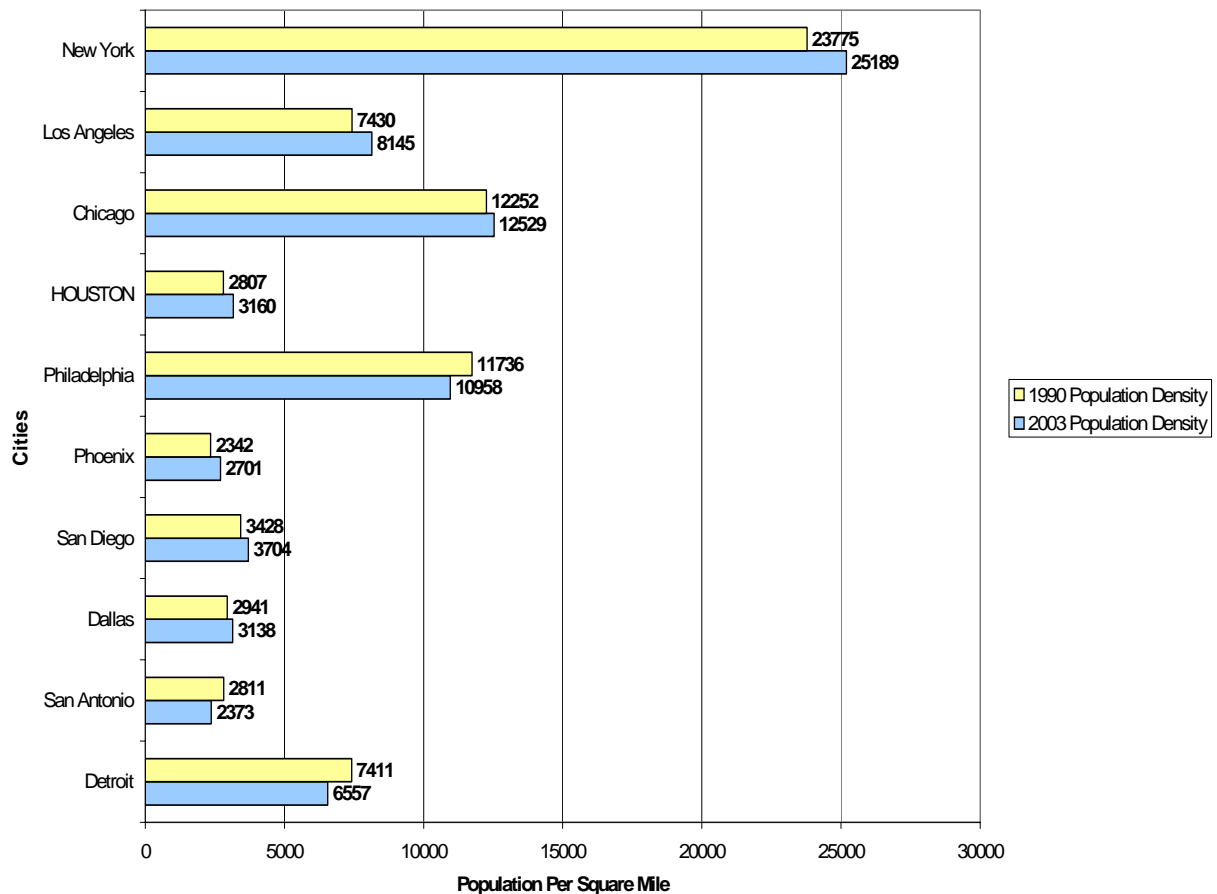


* Houston has the fourth lowest density in the ten-city comparison, with a population per square mile of 3,160.

* New York has the highest density followed by Chicago and Philadelphia, respectively.

* Houston, Dallas, and Phoenix have comparable densities.

Population Change Per Square Mile: 1990 to 2003



* New York leads the nation in terms of density. The number of people per square mile increased from 23,775 in 1990 to 25,189 in 2003.

* The population density increased in the City of Houston by 13.3% between 1990 and 2003.

* Only three cities experienced decreases in densities. Philadelphia and Detroit lost population during the period and San Antonio annexed a large amount of land (179 square miles).